

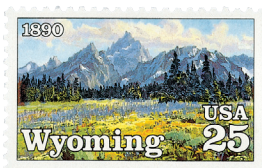
This Day in History... July 10, 1890

Wyoming Becomes 44th US State

On July 10, 1890, Wyoming was accepted as America's 44th state. Per its state constitution, it was the first state to give women the right to vote.

American Indians lived in Wyoming at least 11,000 years ago. When the first Europeans arrived in the area, they found many Indian groups living on the prairies, including the Bannock, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Crow, Shoshone, Sioux, and Ute. These Indians followed the great herds of buffalo, which provided them with an abundant source of meat.

In the mid-1700s, French trappers probably became the first Europeans to enter Wyoming. However, the area remained unexplored until after the 1800s. Most of Wyoming was purchased by the United States in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. American trappers then came to the area. In 1807, John Colter became the first European to travel across the Yellowstone area. A party of fur traders led by Robert Stuart found an easy way to cross the mountains, which became known as the South Pass.



Wyoming Centennial stamp picturing the Grand Teton Mountains

Lieutenant John C. Frémont explored the Wind River Mountains in 1842 and '43. The famous scout Kit Carson served as Frémont's guide. Based on Frémont's report, Congress decided to build a series of forts along the Oregon Trail to protect settlers moving west. In 1849, the government bought Fort William, which was later renamed Fort Laramie.

Sections of present-day Wyoming had been part of the territories of Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Dakota. Part of southern Wyoming was claimed by Spain from the 1500s to the 1800s. Mexico gained possession following its independence in 1821. Texas claimed a portion of the region after its independence from Mexico in 1836. All of Wyoming became US territory after Texas joined the Union in 1845 and the Mexican-American War ended in 1848. During the 1840s, many settlers traveled across Wyoming, heading to the West. Thousands of people passed through Wyoming, but few stayed.

At first, the Plains Indians were tolerant of the wagon trains crossing their land. In fact, Native Americans often assisted the travelers. But by 1849, the number of settlers began to alarm the Natives. Settlers passing through killed or frightened away the wild animals, created massive grass fires on the prairies, and introduced diseases. Some fighting broke out between the Natives and settlers, and the US Army often intervened. Fort Phil Kearny was built in 1866, to keep the Bozeman Trail open, which connected the Oregon Trail to the Montana gold fields. The trail had been blazed just three years before and cut through the heart of the traditional lands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota. Native American warriors led by Chief Red Cloud laid siege to the fort, forming what came to be known as the *Circle of Death*. Hundreds of soldiers died before a treaty was signed. The US gave up Fort Phil Kearny and two other forts. Then, the Native Americans agreed to allow the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad in southern Wyoming.

Wyoming's mineral resources, especially gold, attracted many settlers even before the fighting had ended. The growth of towns was fueled by the Union Pacific Railroad, which entered the area



Issued for Wyoming's 50th anniversary, this stamp pictures the state seal.



The Wyoming state flag features the state seal branded on the shoulder of the state animal, a bison. The blue background represent the sky and the mountains. The red border represents the Indians who lived on the land. The white exemplifies purity.

This Day in History... July 10, 1890 continued

in 1867. In 1868, the Territory of Wyoming was created.

On December 10, 1869, Wyoming's territorial legislature gave women the right to vote, hold office, and serve on juries. This new law was the first of its kind in the US. The first US women jurors served in Laramie in 1870. Esther H. Morris became the first woman justice of the peace, serving at South Pass City.

In 1872, Congress created Yellowstone National Park – the nation's first national park. The park immediately attracted tourists, and the future state's tourism industry was born. In 1883 and 1884, new oil wells were drilled all over the Territory of Wyoming. Cattle ranching also played a large part in the economy.

By the late 1880s, Wyoming's leaders were ready to make their territory a state. Their state constitution was controversial in Congress, particularly because it would allow women to vote. Wyoming also had a relatively low population, estimated to be less than the 60,000 minimum required to become a state. In spite of these obstacles, statehood was granted and Wyoming became America's 44th state on July 10, 1890. Three years later, Wyoming adopted its state seal, which commemorates its history in women's rights as well as its livestock and mining heritage.

Stamp pictures elk and the Grand Teton Mountains.



The April 4, 2002 release of the Greetings From America sheet marked the first time a US postage stamp was issued on the same day in every state.

Soon, many settlers flocked to the state. Most of these people started small cattle ranches. The larger ranchers, known as "cattle barons," accused the smaller ranchers of stealing or "rustling" their cattle. The cattle barons formed the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, and hired detectives to protect their interests. Detectives and hired gunmen from Texas killed two ranchers in what became known as the Johnson County War before federal forces could intervene. Conflicts were renewed when sheep herders and cattlemen vied for control of prime grazing lands. Three sheepmen were killed during one fight.

After 1900, Wyoming progressed rapidly. Large amounts of land were opened for settlement in 1909, 1912, and 1916. Irrigation projects approved the state's agricultural industry. The rock formation Devils Tower was declared the nation's first national monument in 1906. Tourists flocked to Devils Tower and Yellowstone National Park, generating large amounts of revenue. The oil and mineral industries grew rapidly during the early-to mid-1900s. These resources helped the state avoid much of the economic woes of the Great Depression. Mineral mining and processing increased with World War II.

From the 1934 National Parks issue



However, during the 1980s, Wyoming began to experience an economic decline. Oil prices fell and demand for the state's uranium was reduced drastically. Large numbers of people began to leave the state. By 1990, Wyoming ranked as the least-populated state in the Union. In recent years, the state has launched initiatives to draw more people to the state, with limited success. Today, the state's major industries are mineral extraction, tourism, and travel.



Wyoming's state bird and flower are the Western Meadowlark and Indian Paintbrush.



Stamp pictures the flag with two bighorn sheep.

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